



Dance Index



Alla Nazimova. "Salome".
1923. (United Artists)

Dance Index

Editors

LINCOLN KIRSTEIN

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Comment

In 1945 DANCE INDEX published a Catalogue of Dance Films, compiled by Dr. George Amberg, Curator of the Department of Theatre Arts, the Museum of Modern Art. This was a listing of non-commercial films containing nearly a thousand items, which proved to have such a wide-spread interest that the edition is practically sold out.

Few of these amateur films have any appreciable artistic merit. They were made simply to record, as accurately as possible, the literal performances of certain dances and dancers, and as such have a definite value. The "cameramen" deserve much credit for their patient persistence, and as film technique and equipment improve, it is to be hoped they will continue their good work and that new devotees will join their ranks.

The use which dancing and the commercial films have made of one another is an entirely different matter, and well worth some study. Miles of film have been wasted on elaborate stagings of incoherent mass movements; carefully contrived short sequences have become lost in the shuffle, and innocent editors have snipped happily away with no very clear notion of why or how to cut. None of this is surprising in view of the fact that the foremost film directors and choreographers have scarcely been encouraged to evolve a satisfactory, mutually-effective technique. That they wish to do so we believe from their repeated efforts; that they may eventually succeed we have reason to

hope from a few engaging sequences that have appeared from time to time.

The following article by Arthur Knight, Assistant Curator of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, is by no means an exhaustive survey of the world-wide scene. It is rather an outline of the different approaches made by the film-makers to harness and exploit the theatrical appeal of dancing, from the early miracle of spastically-moving pictures accompanied by suitable piano music, to the sharp, clear images perfectly synchronized with their own sound tracks which we take for granted today.

His investigations have led Mr. Knight to diagnose certain ailments for which, though he offers no panacea, possible treatment is suggested by the very analysis of the complaints.

Thoughtful criticism, essential to the health of all art, is particularly so to a collaborative one in the making, and in the normal course of duty the film-reviewer is not specifically concerned with dancing *per se*, though an unusually effective or disappointing new number by Fred Astaire or Gene Kelley will of course provoke some comment. If Mr. Knight's study is of interest to the dance audience, we hope it may also provide food for thought to those whose primary concern is the development of the motion picture itself.

M. E.

DANCE INDEX is indebted to the Picture Collection of the New York Public Library and the Museum of Modern Art Film Library for many of the stills used in this issue.

Covers: Dance patterns arranged by Busby Berkeley for "Dames". 1934.

(Warner Bros.)

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DANCING IN FILMS

By ARTHUR KNIGHT

Dancing is a composite art, an art that embraces both music and physical movement. Since the dance can not exist without music, it is obvious that there could have been no true dance film until the sound track was added to the motion picture. There was, however, dancing in films from the very moment that pictures learned to move. The first cameramen, well aware that it was movement which distinguished their work from that of other photographers, trained their primitive lenses on all those objects in the world around them in which action was the essence—the train roaring round a bend,

the waves sweeping up onto a beach, and, of course, the dancer. Loie Fuller, and a host of less famous dancers such as Annabella and Cleo de Merode were on celluloid before the century was well turned.

In every instance, however, these early films consisted merely of a short dance sequence photographed by one camera from a single set-up. The dance was not rearranged to suit the aesthetics of the camera. (Who ever heard of film aesthetics in those days?) Nor was the camera shifted from place to place, from angle to angle, to catch more effectively the subtler nuances of the per-

Annabella. Butterfly Dance. ca. 1897. (Edison)





Rudolph Valentino. Tango, "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." 1921.
(M.G.M.)

formance. (Who ever noticed nuances in those days? It was enough that the image moved!) What resulted was merely a photographic record of a dance, a dance memorandum. Through the years that followed—and indeed right up to the present day—cameramen have gone on recording dance performances, and it is gratifying that the work of such outstanding artists as Pavlova, Mary Wigman, Ykatarina Geltzer and Martha Graham has been preserved for study in this form.

But these can be regarded as no more than study films. Dances removed from their own medium, and lacking the music that sustained them, offer but a sketch, a mere suggestion of the finished theatrical performance. These record films are certainly valuable to students, who could not otherwise see with their own eyes an approximation of

the art that was Pavlova's; and they are often useful to the artists themselves, enabling them to study their own work objectively, critically. And, as is becoming increasingly the case, ballet companies can use this film medium to catalogue the works that have appeared in their repertoires—surely a more satisfactory and permanent record than dance notation.

To regard these record films as dance films, however, as an art in their own right, is to ignore not only the nature of the film medium, but of the dance itself. Dancing entered the films when they were in their infancy. Those first dance films were made in the only way that film makers knew how to photograph any sort of scene: The camera was set up in a convenient spot, giving a good, clear view of the action, and the cameraman turned his crank until either the

action was completed or the film gave out. It was not long, however, before the masters of early film technique, bent on the development of the story film, began to notice that better results could be obtained by cutting short the action, breaking up the scenes, placing the camera close for this shot and distant for that and, by editing these lengths of film together, they discovered that they could produce a more affecting sequence than if they photographed from only one position. As they came to know the capacities of their cameras, they learned too that lighting, angles, and camera movement all added to the vocabulary of their art.

But the answer to the problem of the dance film is not to be found in the camera alone, nor in what can be done with the editor's shears. At best, this is a mechanical solution—as has been proven by the many

films even in recent years that have attempted to break down and then reassemble in cinematic terms the elements of a dancer's theatrical performance. Such was the technique used in making films like *GAIETE PARISIENNE* and *CAPRICCIO ESPAGNOL*. The dances were performed not once but many times, while the camera took now a full shot, now a medium, now a close up of hands or legs or patterned groups. These strips were then edited together, the performance built up by putting into the film what seemed the most significant aspects of each development of the dance. And the result was chaos—a jumbled flurry of arms and legs and sweeping skirts wholly lacking in artistic integration, because the organic unity of the original dance as conceived for the stage was precisely what had been dissipated in the editing process.

Anna Pavlova. *Oriental Dance*. 1924.



This insistence even today on the editing process seems a logical outcome of the fact that in silent feature pictures there often were dancing sequences. One remembers Valentino's famous tango from *THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE*, Nazimova's *Dance of the Seven Veils* in her *SALOME*, or Crawford's *Charleston* in *OUR DANCING DAUGHTERS*. All were sequences necessary to advancing the plot of those films, and therefore all were done, of course, in the technique of the larger film. What is ignored today is the fact that these bits were made not as dance films, but as components of a story film, with plot elements often likely to obtrude into them. And such was the dance film until the advent of sound; either a film record of a dance or an element in a larger picture from which it derived not only its technique but its very *raison d'être*. Its own potentialities were unrealized, unexplored.

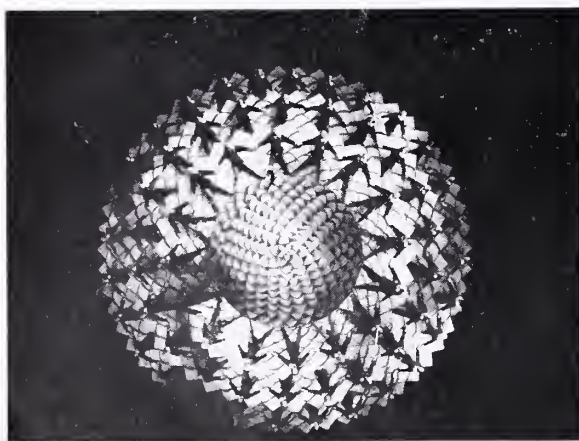
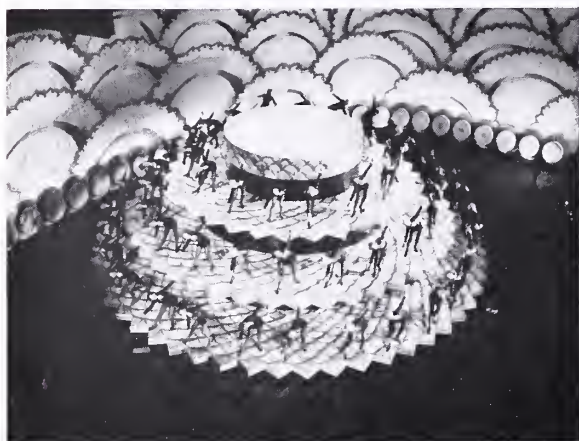
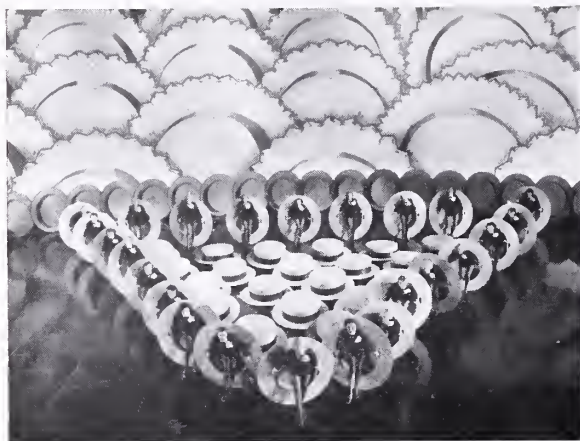
Sound came to the films in 1927 and, just as at the beginning of film history, producers again sought out those elements that best lent themselves to the new medium. The first few years of sound film history are made hideous by the memory of that mathematical absurdity, the "100% talking, 100% singing, 100% dancing" film. And if the talk was on a low plane, far lower was the plane of the dancing. Apparently the only plots that could be worked up to sustain the filmed dance were variations of the backstage, musical comedy story. Dancing was all done in the traditional Broadway manner, with a line of showgirls stretched across the stage and the camera recording their whirls and kicks from an advantageous seat out front.

It was a step in the right direction then when Busby Berkeley, creator of the dance sequences for *42ND STREET*, *GOLDDIGGERS* OF 1933 and innumerable other Warner Brothers and M.G.M. musical spectacles, perceived that film dance and stage dance are two different things and that there is no



Irina Baronova. "Florian". 1940.

(M.G.M.)



earthly reason why the camera should be tied down to the limitations of stage tradition. True, his dance sequences for *WHOOPEE*, his first assignment, were largely theatrical routines. But suddenly he moved his camera up into the flies, and then out on the catwalk looking down a perpendicular to the stage while his dancing girls outlined a formal pattern especially designed for the camera eye and seen from points of view impossible to a theater audience. In his later films, Berkeley's camera swooped down and ran close to a long line of faces, or they swung far off while the dancers arranged themselves into quivering geometric patterns. With human bodies he produced forms as abstract as ever were found in the most abstract films of the *avant garde*.

On the whole, however, the routines of Berkeley's choruses were really more drill than dance; and increasingly the traditional idea of dancing as a physical expression was being abandoned for dance as a visual experience, camera inventiveness taking the place of invention within the dance form. In *GOLDDIGGERS* of 1933, Berkeley often left his girls all but motionless, posed, as the camera moved past them in great, sweeping, graceful arcs. In his search for new effects, he toyed more and more with the camera alone, finding his novelties in double exposures, rear projections, distortion lenses and unusual angles. But once each new trick had been accomplished, it was no longer a novelty. The number of fresh technical thrills that could be discovered was soon exhausted, and it became apparent that Busby Berkeley, while freeing the dance from its theater frame, had only forced it into a blind alley. The dance sequences themselves were still

The Folies Bergère. 1935. (United Artists)



Joan Crawford. The Charleston, "Our Dancing Daughters". 1928. (M.G.M.)

being firmly cemented into an overworked backstage story designed to "justify" their existence. Lavish costumes, colossal revolving stages, untold numbers of girls were poured in to give the sequences "more production values." But production values, even at fantastic sums per linear foot, have never quite taken the place of genuine creativeness, and that requires something more substantial than technical tricks on which to feed.

Since the coming of sound there have been numerous attempts to solve the problem of integrating ballet and film. The number of experiments in this field alone would indicate that there is a fairly wide-spread feeling that it can be done. The most obvious solution, of course—the one used in the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo shorts as well as many

others—is simply to turn the camera loose from a wide variety of angles and try to make sense of it all at the cutting bench. Often, as in M.G.M.'s *FLORIAN* and the Mexican *YOLANDA*, a complete theatrical ballet has been photographed in this manner and inserted bodily into the center of a fiction film. And there is still some surprise that, despite fine performances, the ballet invariably seems like a caricature of its stage incarnation. The ensemble dancing looks wrong, the scenery in conflict with the dancers. Certainly none of the color or the excitement of the original has ever been captured on the celluloid when the ballet is photographed as a theatrical performance.

Occasionally the argument is advanced in behalf of films of this nature that at least they preserve a record of the original ballet. That is just barely true, but so pitifully little

of the original actually comes through that it scarcely seems a justification for them. Closeups of the ballerina, the suggestion of a *pas de deux*, and the sequence of entrances—these are all that persist. Ensemble work disappears; the design and balance of the stage visualization vanish. What remains is blurred, confused, and supremely unexciting. And why? It is precisely because the ballet was designed originally for the stage and not for the motion picture. Its designs and effects were created to be seen in the round. They exist for the three-dimensional stage. Reduced to the flat plane of the motion picture screen, that design is lost: it becomes disordered and meaningless. All too often has this “ballet record” argument been advanced in defence of a lack of cinematic perception and faulty technique.

A film like *BALLERINA*, on the other

hand, did more than merely acknowledge the fact that dancing is good motion picture material. The idea that dancing belongs in film may even have inspired it. But again, having accepted the idea, the producer was lost. Dancing there was in the film, and dancing created specifically for the film; but there was a story too, and unfortunately the story too often got in the way of the dancing, while occasionally dancing irrelevant to the plot's development worked against the picture. At one of the climactic moments of the film, with Slavenska on stage dancing an original *Mort du Cygne* and little Rose below stage pulling out the prop from beneath the trap, the development of an excellent dance was constantly being broken by the necessary intercutting between the two actions. Here the plot won out. In *YOLANDA*, on the other hand, and in Baronova's Holly-

Mia Slavenska (seated). "Ballerina". 1938. (Benoit-Levy) Culver Service





Gaieté Parisienne. 1940. (Warner Bros.)

wood film, FLORIAN, plot action (trivial though it was) came to a complete halt whenever a ballet was performed. Obviously neither solution can be considered satisfactory.

Only fairly recently has it begun to be suspected that merely starring a ballerina in a conventional love story is not the best way to bring ballet to the screen. I WAS AN ADVENTURESS is a perfect example of the reason why. In it Zorina plays a ballerina who gets mixed up with a gang of international jewel thieves. Zorina had already appeared in enough films for the general public to know that she was a dancer; the script went on to say many times that she was a dancer. But reel after reel ground away and she didn't dance. She didn't dance because it was far more essential to I WAS AN ADVENTURESS to get the silly story under

way. Only after the story itself was over, the mystery solved, the villains apprehended, was there time to get around to the dancing. People who had come to see Zorina, *première ballerina*, were rewarded with six minutes of a special screen version of *Swan Lake*; those who had remained for the story alone might just as well have gone on home once the dancing started.

The dancing itself, as it turned out, was something special. Not great, not masterly, not even particularly good taste, but it did show a keen apprehension by director Georges Balanchine of the difference between stage ballet and screen ballet. His *Swan Lake* was completely reworked. The Swan Queen makes her entrance not from the wings but in a pretty dissolve over a shot of swans swimming. She dies in the arms of her Prince and vanishes into thin air through stop motion

Vera Zorina. *Swan Lake*, "I Was An Adventuress". 1940. (20th Century-Fox)





Galina Ulanova. *Swan Lake*, "Russian Ballerina". 1947. (Artkino)

camera work. For a lovely moment her *grand jeté* is prolonged by slow motion photography. The ensemble also receives attention: it works less stage right and stage left and more to and from the camera itself, even exiting over it. Thus Balanchine has mustered many of the special properties of cinema to fashion a *Swan Lake* that would often be meaningless and occasionally even impossible on the stage, and develops instead—aside from its slickness and cheapness—one of the few adequate film ballets drawn from the classical repertory for presentation on the screen.

On the other hand, although Balanchine himself was less inventive in the *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* sequence from *ON YOUR TOES*, the very nature of the dance produced a more successful ballet. It is not simply because the screen is more at ease when

it is telling a story, although the technique for that, of course, has been developed far beyond the technique for creating lovely and plastic film designs. But the screen has always been far more at home with rhythm dancing than with abstract ballet. The confluence of visual step with audible beat is stimulating in itself. More primary, more primitive than most of our present day theater ballet, true; but Balanchine here has shown that rhythm dancing need not remain on the level of the one-two-three-kick chorus line. The earlier and better parts of *Slaughter* work engagingly with the music, making the screen exciting not only by means of his skillful routines, but through the strong camera angles with which he captured those routines.

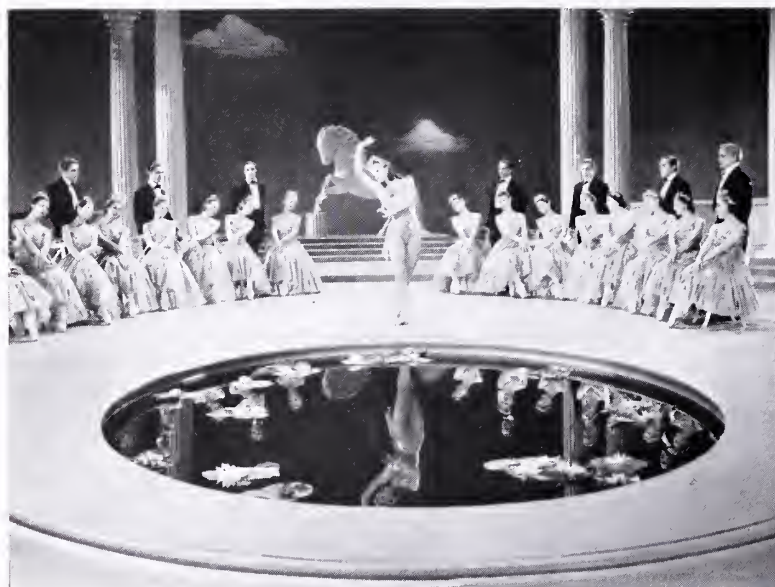
In preparing these two sequences, as well as in his work for *THE GOLDWYN FOLLIES*, Balanchine shared the experience of most

dance directors invited to Hollywood. The development of the films was in other hands: his assignment was for the dances only. Balanchine was more fortunate than most, however. His sequences provided a rare opportunity for creative work. In *I WAS AN ADVENTURESS* the story was already over; he had virtually a free hand with the dancing. In *ON YOUR TOES*, while the ballet was actually part of the story, the *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* number had received such acclaim on the stage that, instead of cutting it down—the fate of most film ballets—Warners actually went to the opposite extreme of over-prolonging it. The frantic tap dance that concludes *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* became by this extension more ludicrous than dramatic, though the sequence itself rose far above the film that surrounded it.

Less happy was the single Hollywood

venture of Agnes deMille, whose stately and lavish court dance for *ROMEO AND JULIET* was ruthlessly hacked “for dramatic purposes.” Her dance, which was conceived as a whole, simply interfered with the plot, and it was in the plot, of course, that the producers were most interested. Similarly, Si-Lan Chen, after carefully documenting and staging the Siamese court dances for *ANNA AND THE KING OF SIAM*, found her efforts reduced to a bare and inconsequential three minutes of playing time, and that not consecutive. The point here seems to be that the Hollywood studios, with their customary prodigality, will engage experienced choreographers to provide simple backgrounds, a foolish and discouraging business for the artists whose careful work is arbitrarily shredded by the editorial shears. This practice seems especially unfortunate in

Vera Zorina. “The Goldwyn Follies”, 1938. (United Artists)



view of the fact the Hollywood studios regularly keep a number of dance directors under contract—people with such fanciful names as LeRoy Prinz and Hermes Pan—who can and do turn out these bits of background dancing with a high if undistinguished polish. But certainly no one with anything serious to offer in any field of the dance can long afford to be tied up with this frustrating sort of creation.

Perhaps it is this realization which has kept Jerome Robbins in the East despite attractive offers from Hollywood. Or perhaps it was Eugene Loring's sobering experience. Loring halted a most promising choreographic career on the stage to work in Hollywood. Although he has been there for several years now, he has participated in only a bare handful of pictures, has produced only one memorable work: the net ballet in Fred Astaire's *YOLANDA AND THE THIEF*. His dances in the new MGM musical, *FIESTA*, no longer even hint at any of the promise he took West with him.

Part of the answer seems to be that Hollywood has little room for the creative artists it employs to design dances, and no understanding of their special talents, except in rare and individual cases. Either the dancing is simply for background purposes, in which the Prinzes and Pans are certainly more than adequate, or it is a sequence for a musical film in which star considerations and studio routine are all too apt to take precedence over the protestations of a studio novice from the ballet stage—even though he was hired specifically for that job. And to a certain extent the studio people are right, for apart from the question of how they use that



Romeo and Juliet, 1936. (M.G.M.)



Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire. "Carefree". 1940. (RKO)

knowledge, they do insist that there is a difference between stage dance and film dance. In fact, that is their favorite argument for stilling new ideas. The unfortunate thing is that before a dance director from the New York stage has gained sufficient stature in the studios to be listened to by established producers and directors, his original ideas seem to disappear and his dance sequences tend to look more and more like all the others that have gone before.

As long as variations on the back-stage theme can still be worked out, we shall no doubt continue to get big production numbers that owe at least part of their allegiance to the theater. In the meantime, however, another film-dance form has been evolving, its emphasis upon some featured dancer-actor who is both the center and the *raison*

d'être of the piece. Not only does this permit the dance sequences to become an integral part of the film, but it allows a far greater freedom in the choice of material for the dance. Now it is no longer the theater as such, but the whole world that provides the stage to be danced upon.

The growth of this type of dance film parallels the Hollywood career of Fred Astaire. It was in his pictures that the discovery was made that the happiest screen dances were not those that pretend to be part of a stage show, but rather the intimate, seemingly impromptu affairs that spring from the action of the moment, offering as their only excuse for being the fact that the dancer simply can not keep his feet still. One remembers Astaire bursting with a secret passion in *BROADWAY MELODY*, dancing all over the dark and abandoned stage where

Eleanor Powell. "Broadway Melody of 1938". (M.G.M.)





Fred Astaire. Bojangles sequence, "Swing Time". 1936. (RKO)

his sweetheart is to perform, bringing into the movement of his dance the tin-pan piano, the chairs, the property steps. Or the street dance, *I Can't Be Bothered Now*, from *A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS*, in which Astaire danced around cars, scuffed up against the curbstones, improvising on whatever came his way. In *CAREFREE*, he "yammed" down the entire length of a room with Ginger Rogers, then out onto the porch and in and around and down the room again. The camera was mounted just ahead of them as they danced, in close, but constantly falling back. It was this action of the camera that gave full expression to the exultation of the two lovers. The world seemed to give way as they advanced; it opened to receive them.

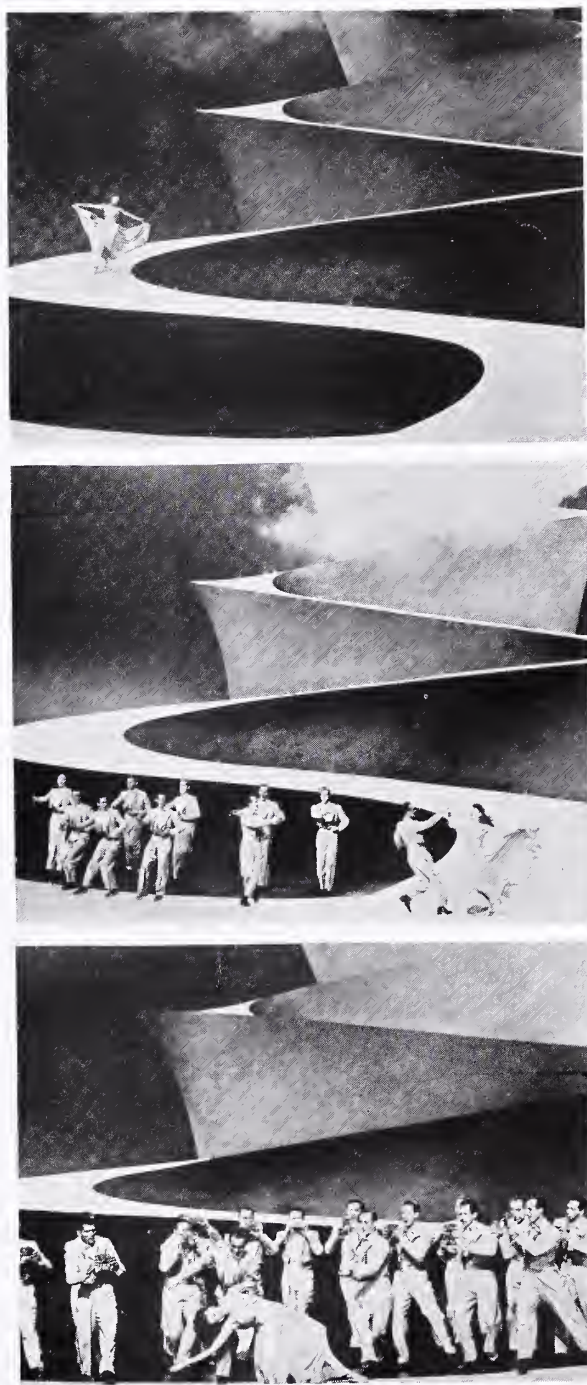
Better still is Astaire's *Bojangles of Harlem* number in *SWING TIME* for its demonstration of how perfectly film technique can

be mobilized to express the full feeling of the dance. The trick screen part of the routine is obvious: Astaire dances in accord, and then in counterpoint to three enormous shadows of himself projected onto a screen behind him. Less obvious, but far more important is that wonderful moment when Astaire stands still, flings his arms into the air and, as the chorus girls dance in toward screen center and the orchestra increases in volume, the camera moves up and back as if in obedience to his gesture. At this point all the elements in the dance film—the action, the camera and the music—participate in the total effect, each contributing its specific quality to the whole. Their confluence creates an exhilarating moment, suggesting the vast possibilities of dance films to come.

Fred Astaire once said in "Theatre Arts": "I think the audience always slumps—even

more in movies than on the stage—when they hear an obvious dance cue, and both the picture *and the dance* seem to lose some of their continuity. Each dance ought to spring somehow out of character or situation, otherwise it is simply a vaudeville act.” It is this consciousness of the problem of relating the dance to an already recognized film type, as well as a superb and basically cinematic technique used in the planning of his dances, that has made Astaire the foremost “choreographer in terms of camera angles,” to use the late Morton Eustis’ excellent phrase. He has realized that even in technique the camera can do much that dance theater does, and do it more excitingly. A step as fundamental to the dance as the *grand jeté* can be actually augmented and intensified by the proper camera angle, the leap seeming to last longer, the thrust to carry further. Moods that the implicit naturalism of the theater may strive in vain to build up are captured in a moment by the legerdemain of the camera.

Gene Kelly, an ardent admirer and pupil of Fred Astaire, has continued the exploration of these fields for the dance film. The dances he devised for *COVER GIRL* and his exuberant *I Begged Her* number in *ANCHORS AWEIGH* all grow out of character. Dancing people, they express their happiness or their sorrow in terms of the dance. It is all too natural to need a song cue or further excuse of any kind. The few moments of his “split personality” dance in *COVER GIRL* made trenchant use of the dance for dramatic effect. Nor can one ignore the fact that its very conception was completely cinematic, that such a dance would be utterly impossible in the theater. Kelly has gone on to explore the possibilities



Rita Hayworth. "Cover Girl". 1944. (Columbia)



Gene Kelly. "Living in a Big Way". 1947. (M.G.M.)

of combining dance with cartoon to good effect in *ANCHORS AWEIGH*, and in his latest picture, *LIVING IN A BIG WAY*, he has again turned to situation for inspiration and material. Another recent arrival from Hollywood, *DOWN TO EARTH*, a rather ingenious twisting of the backstage story, also includes a number of situation dances, all adroitly staged by Jack Cole.

The very nature of the motion picture, however, places limitations upon the themes available to the dance film. There are realms open to the theater ballet from which the more realistic screen is specifically excluded. Screen reality, its closeness to the things around us, makes unthinkable a "Rouge et Noir" in the film. It is too abstract; and its abstractions are expressed completely in terms of the dance within the proscenium.

Similarly, the pretty patterns of *le ballet blanc* turn out disastrously on the screen: Baronova tried it in *FLORIAN*.

On the other hand, such a ballet as "Billy the Kid" might well be on the screen, where its theme of frustration and vengeful assertion could be touched by the realities that give it substance. On the screen we could be made to see the gritty sand, the hot sun and the bigger, stronger men that tore at Billy's soul. "The Great American Goof" is also screen material: Through the camera's dazzling tricks, its kaleidoscopic fantasy could be freed from the sketchy outlines of scenery and quickly removable props that make for practicable production on the stage. "Filling Station", "Bluebeard," the Tudor ballets all would seem to offer themes readily adaptable to the dance film.

Critics have often called attention to the

Fred Astaire. Dream Ballet, "Yolanda and the Thief". 1945. (M.G.M.)





Paul Draper. "Colleen". 1937. (Warner Bros.) Culver Service

ballet quality of René Clair's early sound films, and in truth these films still present some of the best examples of the ideal integration of film and dance. In *LE MILLION* and *A NOUS LA LIBERTE* all life flashed along to music, cascading at last into a grand chase that in its formalization and patterning, its photographing and editing clearly point the way for the dance film. For one thing, Clair's dances all proceeded logically and correctly out of the situations that framed them: *LE MILLION* was actually bound together by the dance of Michel's creditors, which opens and closes the film; while *A NOUS LA LIBERTE*, with its marching prisoners and factory workers and its polyphonic chase after the flying bank-notes, was not only superb film but also, at those

moments, superb ballet. Aside from his ballet interlude *ENTR'ACTE*, however, not even Clair has made a film that was from start to finish completely ballet, nor a sound film that was rhythmic throughout in its movement. Whenever his story permitted it, Clair made dance films—sequences that were a perfect integration of the two arts, and worked skillfully into the narrative film. All that he needed was a completely danceable story with which to create the new film form. Then we should have seen dance film with its basis in film art reaching toward the dance,

But out of the films of Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly, the early ones of René Clair, even out of the experiments of Busby Berkeley, the real dance film is developing. One notes, for example, the impressive integra-

tion of dance and story in *SPECTRE OF THE ROSE*. Whatever may be one's prejudices against the film—the way it stigmatizes all dancers as mad, its stock characters and characterizations, its cheap, melodramatic plot—it did, nevertheless, have a story that could be danced on the screen, and was danced adequately. It proved what should scarcely need proving, that a danceable story is a primary requisite for the true dance film.

One still finds most dancing in films in dance sequences. A feature length picture that dances from start to finish has yet to be seen—a ballet film. What would it look like? Would it include speech? Would it tell a story? In point of fact, could it be? At this

point the clouded crystal ball grows darker still for, on the one hand, the dancers themselves have shown an amazing disinclination to learn film technique even for the purpose of recording their own creations; and, on the other, Hollywood's tentative experiments with anything beyond popular dancing have not been met with the overwhelming demand that spurs it on to greater and yet more lucrative efforts. What seems to be most lacking on either side, however, is that inventive spark to make the fusion—the dance director with a fundamental respect for the film medium, or the film director with a fundamental understanding of the possibilities of the dance form. Only from such hands can come the true dance film. But from such hands it must come.



Fred Astaire. "Blue Skies". 1946. Paramount) Culver Service

